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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/P, EAP/PD - THOMAS HAMM
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage January 5 on the controversy over the U.S. beef issue and the discussions in the Legislative Yuan over amendments to the law concerning U.S. beef imports; on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan; on the domestic concerns over the H1N1 vaccination; and on upcoming legislative by-elections. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a banner headline on page two, reading "Delinking with U.S. Beef [Imports]; [U.S.] Arms Sales to Taiwan Will Be Announced by the End of January at the Earliest." The KMT-leaning "China Times" also ran a banner headline on page two, reading "The United States Writes a Letter to Ma: Hoping Taiwan Will Implement the [Beef] Protocol."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed a "Foreign Affairs" article written by U.S. scholar Bruce Gillery, which said Taiwan is quickly undergoing a process of "Finlandization." The article said such remarks were a severe warning for the Ma Ying-jeou administration, which is believed to be tilting overly to China. A separate "Apple Daily" editorial, however, said Taiwan's 'Finlandization' is nonsensical but suggested that the Ma administration strengthen its relations with the United States. An analysis in the "United Daily News" discussed the U.S. beef issue and criticized Taiwan's national security team for failing to understand what Taiwan and the United States want. An op-ed in the KMT-leaning "China Times" clearly analyzes the Ma administration's "middle-of-the-road strategy" and its connections to the U.S. beef issue. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed the consequences Taiwan might face in the wake of the U.S. beef controversy and said Taiwan should help Washington in the war in Afghanistan, and such efforts will be noticed in Washington. End summary.

A) "Finlandization' Is a Severe Warning for the Ma Administration"

Huang Chih-ta, deputy director of the DPP's Department of International Affairs, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (1/4):

"... U.S. scholar Bruce Gillery recently [published an article] in the prestigious journal, 'Foreign Affairs,' alleging that, given the Ma administration's cross-Strait policy over the past 18 months, Taiwan is walking toward the line of Finlandization. [Such a view] is a misunderstanding which underestimates Beijing's intentions toward Taiwan's sovereignty and overestimates the prowess of the Ma administration.

"Yet Gillery's article was a severe warning for Taiwan. It clearly highlights the fact that the Ma administration's overly China-tilting line, as shown in its cross-Strait policy, has arrived at a critical point, which has not only torn apart [Taiwan] society, causing severe confrontations in public opinion, but has also eroded the foundation of trust between Taiwan and its allies. If the Ma administration fails to try to make any adjustments and seek a balance [of its line], and if Gillery's position were adopted as the mainstream view in Washington, resulting in the United States' cessation of arms sales to Taiwan, the island will be excluded from

[the United States'] allies in Asia. [Washington] will let Taiwan become 'neutralized,' and, as a result, the future of Taiwan, which has lost the support of the international powers, will certainly not be 'Finlandization' but will walk toward the destination of being 'another Hong Kong.'"

B) "Finlandization of Taiwan Is Purely Nonsense"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (1/1):

"... If compared with an article by former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Bill Owens published not long ago -- 'America must start treating China as a friend,' which called for the abolishment of the 'Taiwan Relations Act' (TRA) and a halt to arms sales to Taiwan, we will find that more and more Chinese lobbyists in the United States are pushing for the abolishment of the TRA and a halt to arms sales to Taiwan. It appears that the nightmare of the United States' 'hands-off policy' adopted toward the Nationalist government when the latter retreated to Taiwan in defeat has re-appeared. What is more terrifying is that the call has become popularized and was even published in 'Foreign Affairs.' It will not be too long before it becomes a policy. ...

"... Now some people in America have started to maintain that Taiwan has become 'Finlandized,' in an attempt by the United States to be able to get rid of the hurdle -- Taiwan -- between itself and China.

In reality, how can those scholars not know that China is firmly against the Finlandization of Taiwan? Finland and the [former] Soviet Union are of different ethnic groups and speak different languages, and Finland has long been acknowledged by the international community as an independent sovereign state; all the [former] Soviet Union wanted was for Finland to keep a neutral

stand. Taiwan, on the contrary, 'has long since been a part of China,' as claimed by Beijing, and acknowledging the island's Finlandization would mean a de jure acknowledgement of one China and one Taiwan. What Beijing wants is for Taiwan to become like Hong Kong and Macau. Surely Gillery knows this, so his remarks that Taiwan's Finlandization will be conducive to China's geopolitical interests were nothing but a statement that deceives himself and others.

"What we are seriously concerned about is that the Ma administration totally disregards China's spending big money lobbying in the United States; turns a blind eye to the calls in the United States for the abolishment of the TRA and a thorough change to U.S.-China-Taiwan relations; and just indulges itself in befriending China. Strengthening [Taiwan's] relations with the United States is the foundation for [Ma's theory of] 'harmonizing with China, befriending Japan, and maintaining an intimate relationship with the United States.' Should [Ma] continue to overlook this part [of the job], it will make people justifiably suspect that [Ma] is deliberately distancing [Taiwan] from the United States in order to create conditions for reunification [with China]."

C) "[Taiwan's] National Security Team Knows Nothing about the Island or the United States"

Journalist Stella Wang wrote in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (1/5):

"Following the amendments to the Act Governing Food Sanitation in the Legislative Yuan today, the United States will embark on its retaliation against Taiwan's unilateral abrogation of the U.S. beef protocol. The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) [talks] that Taiwan has long awaited are sure to be stalled, but the [U.S.] arms sales to Taiwan seem unaffected [by the legislative move]. Arms sales are an indicator of Taiwan-U.S. relations, and the U.S. move showed that Taiwan-U.S. relations would unlikely be 'slowed down and get out of balance' as the Ma administration is worried they will be. It is the same for every country that its national interests always come first, so it does for the United States. Trade and economics are just one of the means in dealing with other countries, and they should not necessarily affect [Washington's] consideration of [Taiwan's] national security. ...

"The United States wants to import the [whole range of] beef [and

beef products] to Taiwan, though the attempt has failed for the time being. Washington only lost face but not its substantive interests.

Taiwan allows the amendments that restrict [U.S. beef imports] to pass; it may look good on the face of it but has actually lost everything in reality. A more serious problem in this incident is that [Taiwan's] national security team knows nothing about the island or the United States -- it overlooks public opinion [in Taiwan] while failing to predict what moves the United States will make next."

D) "Calculations and Limitations of the Ma Administration's Middle-of-the-Road Strategy"

Wu Yu-shan, research fellow at the Academia Sinica's Institute of Political Science, opined in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (1/1):

"The Ma administration has received quite a lot of criticism since it assumed office more than a year ago, partly because it is believed to be titling overly to China and partly for the perception that it is unable to resist U.S. pressure by allowing the import of U.S. beef products that may be risky to people's health. These two matters are actually closely related, and to understand their connection, one must start with the Ma administration's middle-of-the-road strategy. When the KMT regained its power in 2008, its strategic plan was to pick a line that is opposite to the one taken by the previous DPP government. ..."

"President Ma's new line was made with the intent [to remedy] the [Chen Shui-] Bian administration's defects. He used the '1992 Consensus' as a stepping stone to succeed in improving relations with Beijing; used the eased cross-Straits relations to alleviate the United States' worries; sought fundamental support from the Blue camp by stopping 'de-Sinification'; and then used the [declaration of] 'no unification, no independence, and no use of force' and identification with Taiwan to [seek to] mitigate opposition from the DPP. His line is fundamentally to 'have a footing between the Blue and Green' in Taiwan, and to 'keep a balance between the United States and China' internationally. Even though Ma comes from the KMT, a party which is traditionally pro-U.S. and anti-independence, he has tried the utmost he can to improve [Taiwan's] relations with Beijing, yet at the same time embracing the Taiwan-centric awareness. The Blue, Green, United States, and China all can find something in Ma that is acceptable to each of them, and, likewise, they will also find something that is disappointing in him. In

contrast to the Bian administration's 'one gain and three loses' [i.e. gain the support of the Green but loses the trust of the Blue, the United States and China], the Ma administration strategy is to get 'four gains' with its middle-of-the-road line.

"Such a middle-of-the-road line did succeed in certain breakthroughs in the beginning.... Yet it also has its limitations. The line former President Chen Shui-bian adopted was to seek a breakthrough on one side without considering the others. The Ma administration's new policy, however, seeks to attend to every detail, fearing that it will offend any side. ... For the United States, it certainly supports the Ma administration's efforts in improving relations with Beijing. But in the face of the rising China, it cannot help but have misgivings that Taiwan will not be able to hold its stand firmly and will thus be taken in completely by mainland China and eventually become a part of China's economic and political sphere of influence. For the DPP, no matter how strongly the Ma administration pledges its loyalty to Taiwan, it cannot help but have doubts. When it sees the rise of China and becomes a hegemony in the world, it is all the more worried that the KMT's connections with Beijing will eventually sell out Taiwan. As a result, the 'middle-of-the-road strategy' that attempts to please every side, after having been implemented for some time, will unavoidably result in some gaps in the expectations of each side, and the Ma administration will naturally fall under tremendous pressure.

"... The Ma administration believes that improving cross-Straits relations is a necessary move to save Taiwan's economy, but he began to stagger, having been dragged and pushed by the opposition powers in Taiwan. Likewise, he understands the U.S.' concerns when seeking to improve [Taiwan's] relations with Beijing, so he is all the more susceptible to U.S. pressure on issues such as U.S. beef imports, in

fear that any mishandling of such issues will sabotage [Taiwan's] relations with the United States. The Ma administration hopes to acquire a balanced position between the United States and China and seek to win over Washington while making friends with Beijing. This is the strategic guiding principle adopted [by the Ma administration] for the U.S. beef issue, which has totally exceeded pure considerations for public health and economics. In the end, given the mishandling [by the Ma administration], domestic political pressure forced Taiwan to violate its deal [with the United States], and the Taiwan government's [original] goodwill gestures and expectations for the United States will likely create totally opposite results. This is something unavoidable when a middle-of-the-road strategy seeks to balance each side."

E) "Afghanistan: Opportunity for Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (1/5):

"Pundits have busied themselves in the past week trying to determine whether a decision by Taipei to renegotiate US beef imports with Washington will have implications on US security commitments to Taiwan. Already, an unexpected delay in US President Barack Obama's weapons sale notification to Congress -- which had been expected soon after Obama returned from climate talks in Copenhagen last month -- had prompted speculation that Washington may be tying economic matters to political ones and retaliating for the about-face. Not only is it too soon to tell, but 60 years of US-Taiwan ties have shown that Washington, at least in Taiwan's case, is capable of treating economics and politics as separate matters -- as they should be. Likelier explanations for the delay are the conflicting interests of the State Department, the Department of Defense and the White House, as well as Obama's balancing act with Taipei and Beijing and efforts to avoid derailing cross-strait rapprochement.

"Washington handles diplomacy in multi-track fashion in that it usually rewards and punishes within related sectors. As such, it retaliates on trade with trade, and on military matters with military matters, with little cross-pollination. Failure by Taipei to demonstrate that it takes its own defense seriously, as opposed to freeloading on US security guarantees, would be one way to invite US retaliation on arms sales. Lack of participation in non-proliferation efforts, which were somewhat undermined last month when British intelligence linked Taiwanese private firms to the sale of sensitive equipment to Iran, would be another. US beef, however, isn't a deal-breaker on defense issues -- however strongly some US policymakers feel about the matter.

The US also expects its allies to share the security burden. Nowhere has this been clearer than in Afghanistan, where US generals have made plea after plea on NATO and non-NATO allies to do more. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Washington would ask Taiwan to play a role in Afghanistan. Last week, a source in the Ministry of Defense told the media that the US wants Taiwan to provide medical or engineering assistance to troops there. This request is not unprecedented: During the Gulf War in 1991, Taipei offered US\$300

million toward the war effort, which Washington turned down after pressure from Beijing. More recently, Taiwan has provided medical assistance in Iraq.

"Afghanistan is the story of our time, as its future direction will have a direct impact on international security. No country, however isolated, will be unaffected if the US-led alliance fails to avert Afghanistan's implosion - not even Taiwan. As a wealthy country that has profited from the US umbrella for decades and as the world's 20th largest military by spending, Taiwan must contribute to global stability, which would not go unnoticed in Washington.... Taiwan must step up to the plate, otherwise it may be kicked out of the game altogether."

STANTON